



PIRENEA CUCULIOPERA.

Painted and engraved by J. G. Keane.

# PERISTERA CHALCOPTERA, Swains.

## Bronze-winged Pigeon.

*Columba chalconotus*, Lath. Ind. Orn., vol. ii. p. 604.—Wagl. Syst. Av. Columba, sp. 57.

*Colombe lumachelle*, Temm. Fig., fol. 2nde fam. pl. 8. p. 17.—Ib. Fig. et Gall., tom. ii. pp. 103 and 448.

*La Tourterelle aux ailes dorées*, Sonn. edit. de Buff., tom. vii. p. 309.

*Bronze-winged Pigeon*, Lath. Gen. Syn. Supp., vol. ii. p. 266.—Phill. Bot. Bay, pl. in p. 162.—White's Journ., pl. in p. 146.—Shaw, Lev. Mus., p. 227. pl. 55.—Lath. Gen. Hist., vol. viii. p. 31.—Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xi. p. 17, and vol. xiv. p. 280.

*Peristera chalconotus*, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 349.

*Phaps chalconotus*, Selby, Nat. Lib. Orn., vol. v. Pigeons, p. 195. pl. 21.—G. R. Gray, List of Gen. of Birds, 2nd edit. p. 75.

*Oô-da*, Aborigines of Western Australia.

*Ar-a-wa-ra-wa*, Aborigines of Port Essington.

*Bronze Pigeon*, Colonists of Swan River.

---

THE Bronze-winged Pigeon is so generally distributed over all parts of Australia, that, without a single exception, the colonists of every settlement have found the surrounding country inhabited by this fine bird. Specimens from Port Essington, Swan River, Van Diemen's Land and New South Wales differ so little from each other, either in their size or markings, that they must all be regarded as one and the same species, the slight differences that do occur being too trivial to be considered as other than mere local variations.

It is a plump, heavy bird, weighing when in good condition fully a pound; and its pectoral muscles being deep and fleshy, it constitutes a most excellent viand and is constantly eaten by every class of persons, being equally acceptable at the table of the Governor and at that of the inmate of a log-hut in the interior of the country. Its amazing powers of flight enable it to pass in an incredibly short space of time over a great expanse of country, and just before sunset it may be observed swiftly winging its way over the plains or down the gullies to its drinking-place. During the long drought of 1839—40, when I was encamped at the northern extremity of the Brezi range, I had daily opportunities of observing the arrival of this bird to drink; the only water for miles, as I was assured by the natives, being that in the immediate vicinity of my tent, and that was merely the scanty supply left in a few small natural basins in the rocks, which had been filled by the rains of many months before. This peculiar situation afforded me an excellent opportunity for observing not only the Bronze-wing, but every other bird inhabiting the neighbourhood: few if any of the true insectivorous or fissirostral birds came to the water-holes; but, on the other hand, those species that live upon grain and seeds, particularly the Parrots and Honey-eaters (*Trichoglossi* and *Meliphagi*), were continually rushing down to the edges of the pools, utterly regardless of my presence, their thirst for water quite overcoming their sense of danger; seldom, if ever, however, did the Bronze-wing make its appearance during the heat of the day, but at sundown, on the contrary, it arrived with arrow-like swiftness, either singly or in pairs. It did not descend at once to the edge of the pool, but dashed down to the ground at about ten yards' distance, remained quiet for a short time, then walked leisurely to the water, and after taking libations deep and frequent, winged its way to its roosting-place for the night: with a knowledge, therefore, of the habits of this bird, the weary traveller may always perceive when he is in the vicinity of water; and however arid the appearance of the country may be, if he observes the Bronze-wing wending its way from all quarters to a given point, he may be certain to procure a supply of food and water. When rain has fallen in abundance, and the rivers and lagoons are filled not only to the brim, but the water has spread over the surface of the surrounding country, the case is materially altered; then the Bronze-wing and many other birds are not so easily procured, the abundant supply of the element so requisite to their existence rendering it no longer necessary that they should brave every danger in procuring it.

It has been supposed that a partial migration of this species takes place from time to time, a circumstance which I think is very probable, as its numbers are sometimes suddenly increased. After the breeding season is over, both the adults and young resort to the stubble fields of the settlers in such abundance, that although more than one can rarely be procured at a shot, from twenty to thirty brace may be killed in a day; and at this season it is in better condition than at any other. Although, as I have before stated, the Bronze-wing is an excellent article of food, it must yield the palm in this respect to the Wonga-wonga Pigeon (*Leucosarcia picata*) and the Partridge Bronze-wing (*Geophaps scripta*), whose flesh is white and more delicate in flavour, while the internal pectoral muscle only of the present bird is of that colour.

The Bronze-wing feeds entirely upon the ground, where it finds the various kinds of leguminous seeds that